2: Jochelson E-5 (1884-1902) 1933 Yakut

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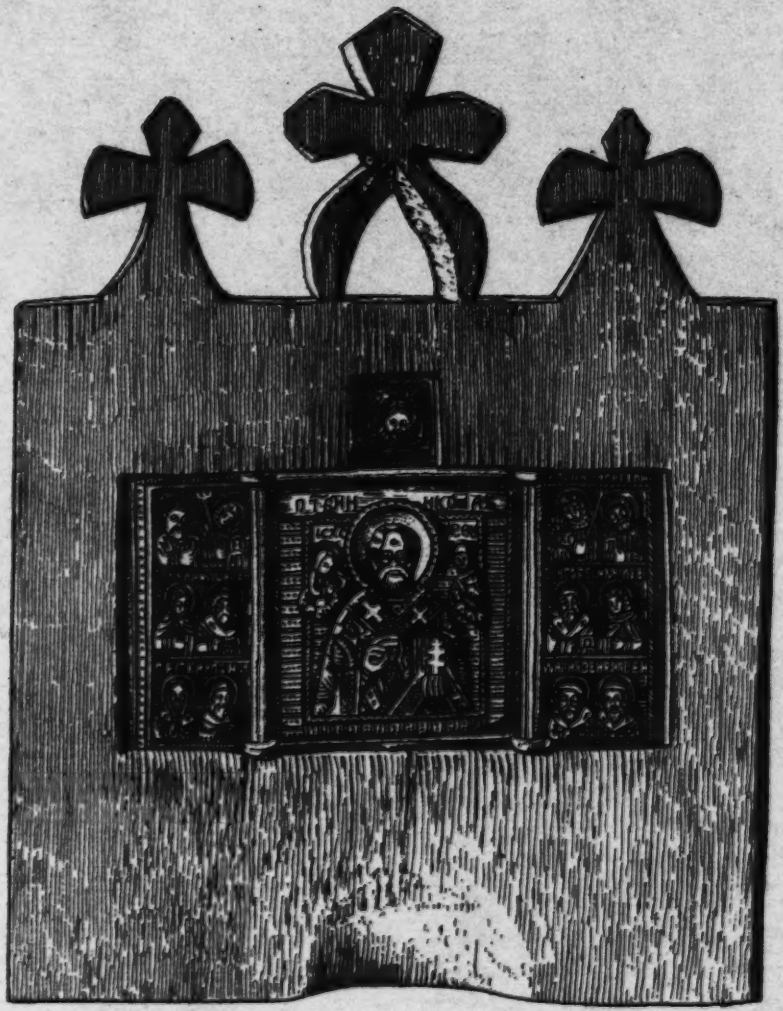

Fig. 20 (70-8662). Brass Representation of Saints, forming Part of the Furnishings of a Yakut Hut.

2: Jochelson E-5 (1884-1902) 1933 Yakut

and shut out mosquitoes. We may assume that this kind of dwelling was invented by the Yakut after their arrival in their present territory from a more southerly habitat. Indeed, the present Yakut dwelling is far more fitted to the harsh sub-polar or polar climate than any type of tent.

When living near cities or Russian settlements, the Yakut abandon their earth huts and live in log houses of the Russian type. Fig. 23 illustrates a log house of a rich Yakut elder on the Lena River not far from the City of Yakutsk.

As a summer dwelling, the ancient Yakut used a conical tent covered with birchbark (Fig. 24). It differs from other types of birchbark tents in size and in the heavy and solid construction of the wooden frame, so that it cannot be easily transported. These large tent-like dwellings

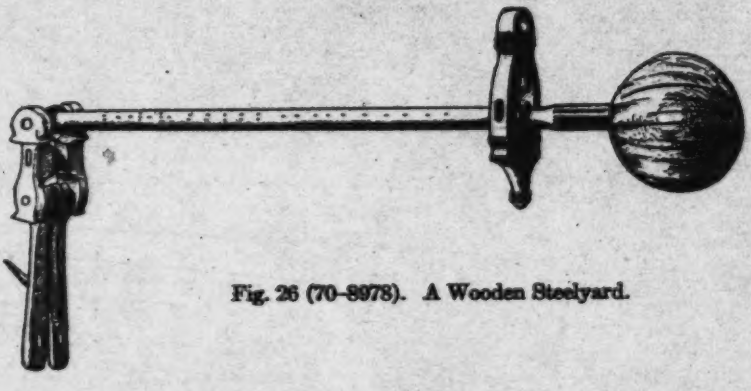

Fig. 26 (70-8978). A Wooden Steelyard.

were located far from the winter earth huts of the Yakut and were occupied during the summer so that the horses and cattle might not injure the meadows on which hay is grown for the winter and near which the winter dwellings are situated.

The fireplace of the birchbark tent is constructed like the hearth of the earth hut, i.e., it is a large wooden bottomless box filled with beaten clay. The only difference is that in the tent the fireplace is situated in the center under the opening in the top and has no chimney. This type of dwelling is no longer used, though twenty-five years ago it was occasionally observed. The tent was ornamented with engravings, wood, and birchbark carvings, sinew and horsehair embroidery, and with slivers of colored mica and pieces of bright cloth.

In some districts a polygonal sloping-roofed blockhouse (Fig. 25) was used instead of the conical tent. The author saw such blockhouses

53: Tokarev and Gurvich E-4 (no date) 1964
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people used wooden floors, under Russian influence. The size of the dwelling varied from 5 × 5 to 10 × 10 m, and in height was slightly higher than the head. 342

An essential part of every yurt was the hearth and the benches along the walls, as well as the simple uniform utensils. The hearth (ohokh) was usually built on the right of the entrance, close to the northeast corner. It comprised a low (about 25 cm, rectangular area made of clay inside a log frame; a cylindrical pipe, slanting slightly backwards, made of poles and coated on the inside with a thick layer of clay was built above the hearth; the bottom of the pipe was open at the front and acted as the mouth of the stove, while the top went through the roof and was almost always open (it was usually stuffed with something overnight); in the winter there was always a fire burning in the hearth to warm and illuminate the dwelling. The hearth was well ventilated and gave out a lot of heat as long as it was being fed with fuel, hence it used up a great deal of fuel. 354

The plank benches (oron), which were used for sleeping and sitting, stretched along all the walls, filling the gaps between the vertical columns and the bottom of the slanting wall. The benches were divided into different sections, each with its own name and purpose. The most respected bench was the one on the left of the entrance along the southern wall, from the middle to the corner, opposite the hearth—the so-called billirik; somewhat less honorable was the adjoining bench running from that corner along the western wall—the *бастын уга орон* (right-hand front bench); these two benches comprised the corner of honor. To the right was the head of the household's seat (*кэтэҕэрии*). The other benches on the left-hand side of the dwelling were intended for the young men, for workers and for ordinary male guests; on the right-hand side (towards the hearth) was the female half of the dwelling, where the women of the family and visiting women sat. 352 353

The furnishings in the dwelling consist of a small, round or square wooden table (ostuol) in the corner of honor, and several chairs (olokhmas) with the characteristic shape of a hollow cube with ribs made of flexible rods bent at a right angle and a seat made of a thin board; the furnishings also included various kinds of boxes and chests (made of wood and bound with leather), household utensils and so on; the quantity and quality of all the furnishings depended on the wealth of the householders.

A shed of the same design as the dwelling was usually built onto the northern side for the cattle, often under the same roof, though sometimes divided off from the living quarters by merely a thin wooden partition. There was a door leading from the dwelling to the cattle pen behind the hearth. The pen was built on the northern side so as to save some of the heat, but the close contact of the wintering cattle naturally increased the amount of dirt and made the air in the dwelling worse, where it was stuffy and dirty to begin with. 343

A small awning resembling a porch, and sometimes even a porchway (chaampy, *кууга*), was built outside in front of the entrance, particularly by the richer people. 342

The yurt was the ancient winter dwelling of the Yakuts; references to it can be found in 17th-century documents. In the 19th century the yurt also became the normal summer dwelling. The summer camp yurts were constructed in the same way as the winter ones, except for small differences (a light leather door on a frame and so on) and there was no cattle pen. Instead of the latter a summer calf pen (titik) was built